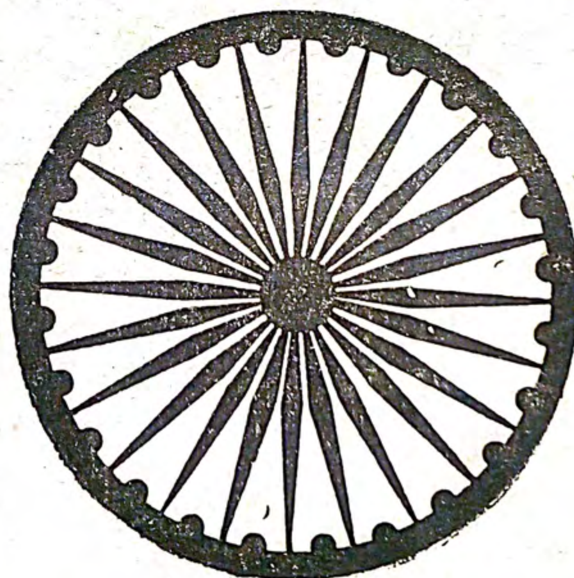
# THE JOURNAL
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CONTENTS

**ILLUSTRATION**

# DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF TIRHUT

BY

*Jai Narain Thakur*

The study of the demographic features of a region has its own importance in the study of the regional geography and planning. It denotes the trend of population growth which is well reflected by the balance of birth-rate and death-rate. But the birth and death rates of any society have some positive effects on the distribution of age groups which, in its turn, influences the economy and resource development pattern. "It is indeed, through analysis of population features that an appreciation of the regional differences can be fully made".[1]

Tirhut is one of the ancient landmarks in Indian history. It is a corruption of Tira-bhukti,[2] which in Sanskrit means those who live on river banks. The ancient Tirhut, is the name of the tract lying between 25° 28′ N. and 26° 22′ N. Latitudes and between 84° 56′ E. and 86° 46′ E. Longitudes. It comprised the whole of the present districts of Champaran, Saharsa, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga, parts of the districts of Monghyr, Bhagalpur and Purnea and some parts of the Tarai region in Nepal, lying between the present districts and the lower ranges of the Himalaya[3]. It was bounded on the north by the Himalayas, and on the east, south and west by the rivers Kosi, Ganga and Gandaki respectively. The Modern Tirhut was created in 1907 A. D.[4] under a separate commissionership comprising Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Saran and Champaran districts. It is bounded on the north by the kingdom of Nepal and the Himalayas, on the east by the Bhagalpur division, on the west by the State of Uttar Pradesh and on the south by the Ganga and Patna Division. Tirhut is a fairly large division in the State of Bihar and contains an area of about 33044 square kilometres (12,748 sqr. miles). Administratively it consists of four districts and no less than eleven sub-divisions.

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1 Trewartha G. T., A case for population geography, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. XIII, No. 2, June, 1953, p. 87.

2 S. N. Singh, History of Tirhut, p. 5.

3 Upendra Thakur, Studies in Jainism and Budhism in Mithilā, Introduction, p. 1.

4 Chaudhary Roy, P. C., Muzaffarpur District Gazetteer, p. 159.

Tirhut has uniformly fertile alluvial soils, replenished by deposition of silt from the annual or frequent floods. Drainage is better than on the plains of the Punjab or of Uttar Pradesh, where the lower gradient of the rivers causes waterlogging. Except in some parts of Saran, milder temperatures in the hot season have spared Tirhut the lane of usar (Saline and alkaline Soils). The normal rainfall is adequate for paddy cultivation, and relief, perunial streams, seapage from the sub-mountane region combine to keep the natural soil moisture sufficiently high for cropping.

**The People** :—According to the census of 1961 the total population of Tithut is 15, 1‹2, 554, comprising 32.5% of the total population of Bihar State and 3.4% of the total population of India. Among the four divisions, Tirhut ranks first as regards population which will be well illustrated from the following table :—[5]

| Division | Population (1961 Census) |
|---|---|
| 1. Tirhut division | 15,122,554 |
| 2. Bhagalpur division | 12,586,116 |
| 3. Patna division | 9,815,655 |
| 4. Chotanagpur division | 8,931,286 |

Dr. Grierson is perhaps justified in describing the people of Tirhut as the dialect of a nationality which has carried conservatism to the excess of unconthness. "Mithila or Tirhut a country with an ancient history traditions of which it retains to the present day, is a land under the domination of a sept of Brahmans extraordinarily devoted to the mint, arise and camnin of the low. For centuries it has been a tract too proud to admit other nationalities to entercourse on equal terms, and has passed through conquest after conquest from the north, from the east and from the west without changing its ancestral peculiarities. The story goes that at the marriage of Ramchandra, the Brahmans of Mithilā showed the same pride which is the characteristic of their descendants of the 19th century. This Brahmanical domination has left ineffaceable marks upon the nature of the rest of the population. Mithilā or Tirhut is one of the most congested parts of India, its inhabitants increase and multiply and impoverish of the earth, nor will they seek other lands on which to practise the one art with which they are acquainted."[6] The age-old geographical isolation has no doubt profoundly influenced the character of the people of Tirhut. The results of this long seclusion may be seen

5 Bihar Through Figures, Directorate of Statistics and Evaluation (Patna 1965), pp, 8-9.

6 Grierson, G. A., Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. V. Pt. II, p. 4.

even in the present day as the people in general are more backward and less enterprising than those of other parts in the state.

**Growth of Population :**—(*a*) *Pre-census period* :—A partial census of Tirhut was taken in the year1791, but as the area of the region was not then the same as it is now, and as it is impossible to make allowance for the changes that have since taken place, the total then arrived at are altogether useless for purposes of comparision. Before the census period the population estimates were made by the Collector of the district on the basis of average number of persons per house. In 1791, the total population of Tirhut as estimated by the then Collector was 1,236,309. Two years subsequently, the population living on lakhiraj lands in Tirhut was estimated at 608,001 souls. At the time of Revenue Survey in 1848-49, yet another attempt at an enumeration was made. The population then was estimated at 1,637,245 persons calculating 5 as the average number to each house. In 1835, Mr. Adam took a census of Bhowara thana in the Madhubani sub-division. In 1856, the population of the entire district was estimated to be 1,856,279 in 1859 and in 1859 the population was 1,527,201. In 1869, efforts were made to take a census in some of the principal towns. These were Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Rosera, Nagarbasti, Bahera, Madhubani, Madhepur, Jhanjharpur, Hajipur, Lalganj, Mahnar and Tajpur. The result gave a gross population of 94,437.[8]

(*b*) *Census period (since 1872)* :—All the previous estimates were found to be below the mark. An exact census was therefore taken in 1872 by Government orders. As to the means adopted for making this enumeration, the collector reports as follows[9] :—

"The census of the District was taken by the agency of village 'Patwaris'. As the registration of these village officers had been for some years past allowed to drop, considerable trouble was involved in the preliminary work of first discovering the village patwaris, and preparing an accurate register of them. This, however, was in the end successfully completed." The growth of population in Tirhut can be studied in different periods of population variation since 1872.

7 Hunter, W. W., A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. XIII, p. 31.

8 *Ibid*, p. 32.

9 Quoted by Hunter, W. W., A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. XIII. p. 32.

(i) Period of Radical Growth (1872-1891) :—There was a gradual increase of population during this period (Fig. 1.) The result of the

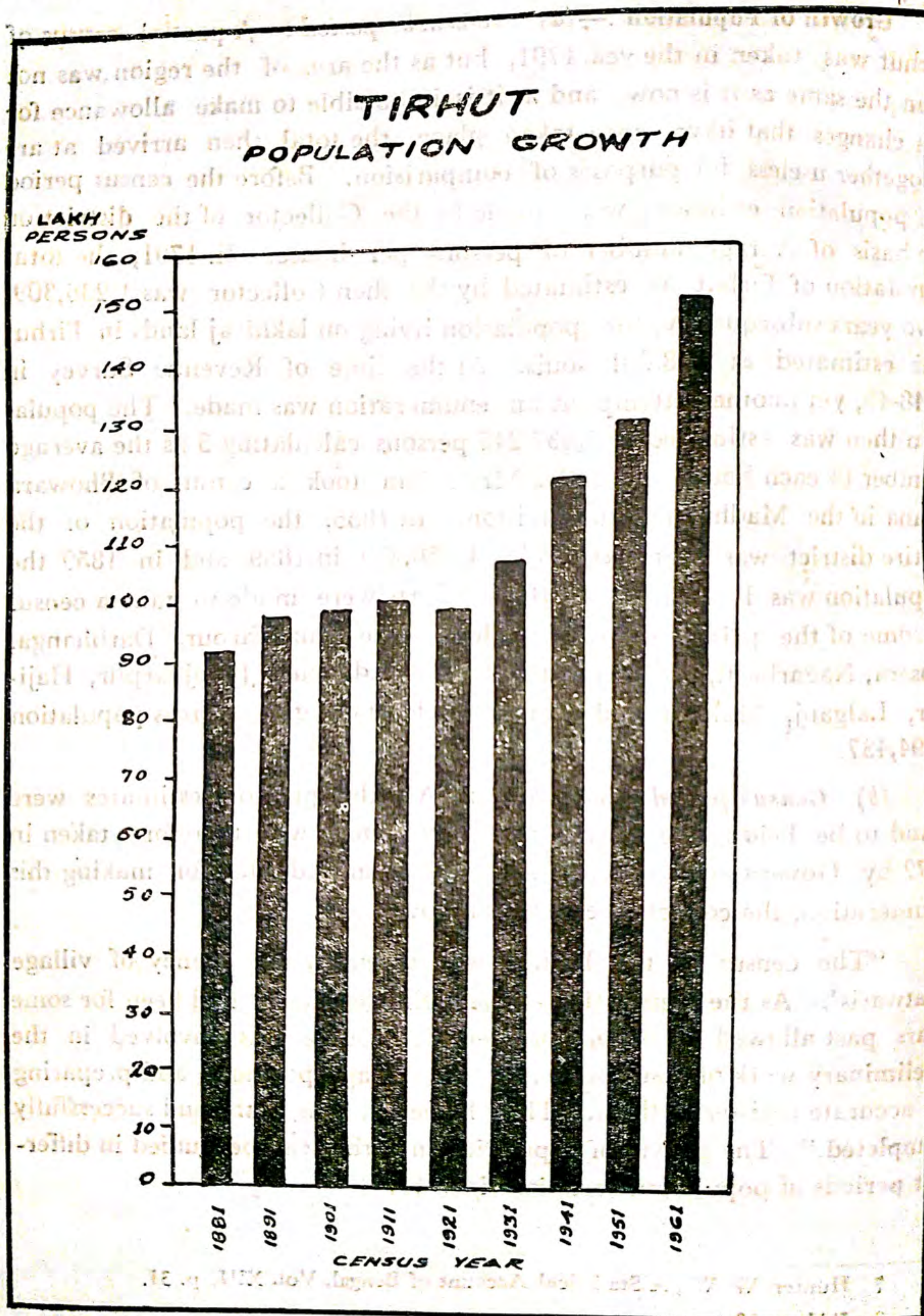



Fig. 1

census of 1872 showed the total population of 4,384,706 souls in Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga but the population of Saran showed the increase from 12,23,713 in 1869 to 20,75,527 in 1872. The next census was taken in 1881, representing an increase of 10·5%. This radical growth of population in both the decades is partly attributable to improved enumeration as it is believed that the previous census were wanting accuracy and completeness.

| Year | Total Population (Persons in Lakhs) | Total decade variation |
|---|---|---|
| 1881 | 9,231,765 | ............ |
| 1891 | 9,840.158 | +91,607 |
| 1901 | 9,868,569 | +29,411 |
| 1911 | 9,973,280 | +104,711 |
| 1921 | 9,949,537 | −23,743 |
| 1931 | 10,739,543 | +790,006 |
| 1941 | 11,959,827 | +1,220,285 |
| 1951 | 12,960,760 | +1,000,933 |
| 1961 | 15,112,554 | +2,161,794 |

(ii) Period of Decline (1891-1901) :—From 1891 a decline in population set in and it continued for tbe next ten years. A fall of 3·7% in Champaran, 2·2% in Saran were recorded in 1901 census. It is a notable fact that Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga, suffered most in the famine year. The fall of population in Saran and Champaran districts were partially due to the ravages of famines and epidemics within the districts. There was a famine in 1897 which had been preceded by several loan years. There was a reduced birth rate due to the low vitality of the people.

(iii) Period of Medium Growth (1901-1921) :—The census of 1911 recorded an increase in population in every part of Tirhut except Saran district. The decrease of 4·9% of population in the Saran district was due mainly to a great increase in mortality because of the plague epidemic between 1901 and 1910. A virulent type of fever which was widespread in 1903, 1905, 1909 and 1919. It may be mentioned here that except Saran and Champaran districts the other districts of Tirhut Division recorded a decline in the population in the census of 1921.

(iv) Period of Rapid growth (1921-1961) :—During this period the population grew rapidly in comparision with the previous censuses because public health remained quite satisfactory. Cholera did not spread in epidemic form in any year. The number of deaths from plague was decreased further. A substantial reduction in the mortality was also

seen. Also the harvests on the whole were satisfactory and the area under plough increased. In the census of 1931 an increase of 10·6% in population was recorded in Champaran. This rate was at par with the rates of increase in respect of the other three districts of Tirhut Division, namely Saran, Champaran and Darbhanga where the percentage of increase in population were 6·26%, 6.75% and 8·67%, respectively.

The rate of increase in population recorded in the census of 1941 was 11·74% and there was an increase of 5, 38, 104 persons in the district of Champaran. The rate of increase here was next only to Saran, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga showed increase of 15·04%, 10·32% and 9·14% respectively.

In the Census of 1951 Champaran district showed an incrase of 4.9%. But the rate of increase was much too low than the rates in the three other disdricts of Tirhut Divison, namely, Saran, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga showing 15.04%, 10.34%, and 9.14% respectively.

In the Census of 1961 the total population increased in all districts of Tirhut Division. The variations of population percentage over the 1951 census is as follows which is also well illustrated in the map (Fig. 2).

| Districts | Population variation. (Since 1951-1961 census) |
|---|---|
| Saran | +13·62% |
| Champaran | +19·51% |
| Muzaffarpur | +16·98% |
| Darbhanga | +17·07% |

The high rate of growth of population was mainly due to the significant fall in the death rate and also due to the improvement in public health, proper arrangements of medicines and utilization of modern surgical techniques, ete.

**Distribution of Population** :—The distribution of population in Tirhut is quite uneven which is clearly obvious in the map (Fig. 3). However the following degrees of population concentrations may be observed :—

(a) *Densely populated Areas* :—These include the urban centres and also the alluvial tracts of the Baghmati, Kamala and Kosi plains. The zone extends from upper Burhi Gandak in the north-west to the river Balan in the east covering the whole of Sitamarhi, Madhubani and parts of Bettiah and Darbhanga Sadar-subdivisions where the average density is around 1,150 persons per square mile and exceeds 1,300 in specially Saran and Muzaffarpur. In Champaran, though the population is sparse, in the Sub-mountane strip towards the north-west, it is fairly dense in the

well watered and richly cultivated east. As a whole, here the population concentration is above 1425 persons per square mile.

(*b*) *Moderately populated Areas* :—Areas with an average of 1225 to 1425 persons per square mile, may be considered as moderately densely populated areas of Tirhut. These areas mainly include the inner zone, the middle zone, and a big tract of outer zone excluding the lowlands, i.e. chaurs and marshes and the diara lands of Tirhut.

(*c*) *Sparsely populated Areas* :—The sparsely populated areas are those which are having from 1025 to 1224 persons per square mile. It comprises a broad transitional zone between the almost uninhabited areas and much better lands. Generally speaking, there is no areas of sparse population in Tirhut except the lowlands along the great rivers. Marshes and chaurs are of course the sparsely populated areas and also included in the sparsely settled areas are the Himalayan foot hills, i. e. Doon and Sumeshwar hills in champaran distrct.

(*d*) *Nearly uninhabited Areas* :—In comparision to the above concentrations of population this area must be styled as the uninhabited areas constituting the diara, and other sandy tracts that lie in the beds of the rivers including the lowlands of the chaurs and marshes. In some cultivated and productive areas the population concentration is evidentely below 1024 persons per square mile.

**Density of Population** :—The average density of Population (Fig. 2) in Tirhut as a whole is 1186 persons per square mile which is almost 1.6 times the state average of 694 and about 3.5 times the all India average of 358 persons per square mile. The Tirhut division in this way is the most densely populated region of the state of Bihar, and figures as high as 1,884 persons per square mile such as Pusa have also been recorded. Among the districts of Tirhut, the district of Champaran is relatively thinly populated and has lesser density per square mile than the neighbouring districts of Saran and Muzaffarpur. The density of population in Champaran was 507 persons per square mile in 1901 as against 898 and 908 per square mile for Saran and Muzaffarpur respectively. The density of population in Champaran in 1951 has been calculated at 713 persons per square mile as against 1,178 and 1,168 for Saran and Muzaffarpur respectively. Although exceeded by the figures for a few individual districts in India such as Howrah the portion of north Bihar comprising the three Districts of Saran, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga has a greater concentration of population than any other tract of equal size in Bengal or elsewhere in India. Of these three districts as mentioned above Muzaffarpur is the most and Darbhanga the least densely

populated, but the pressure on the soil even in the case of the latter is as great as 870 to the square mile. I ying between Muzaffarpur dist. in the west and Bhagalpur district in the east, it partakes in the west of the character of the latter districts.[10] Among the Sub-division in Saran district Saran-Sadar is the most densely populated (1,407 persons per

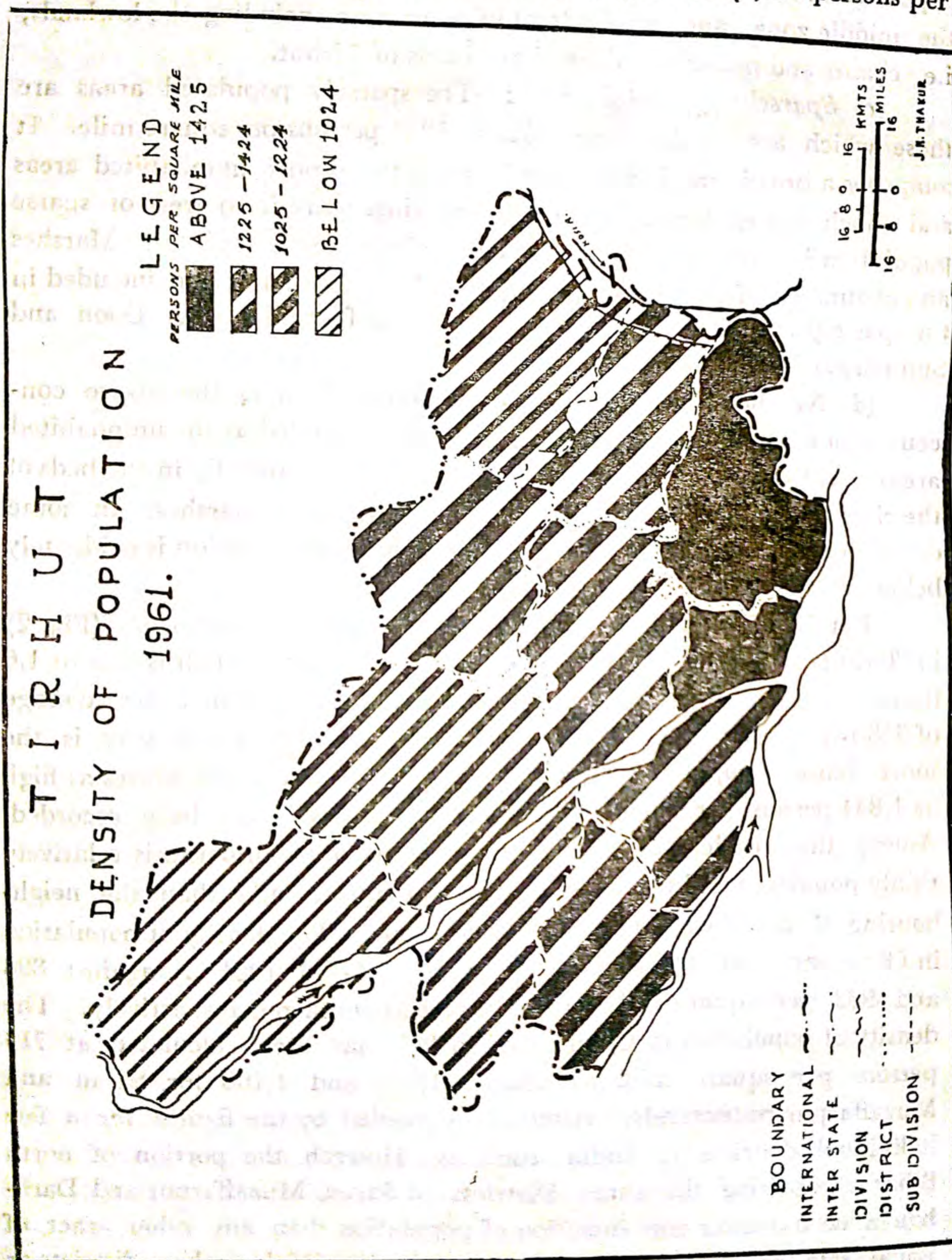



Fig. 2

10 L. S. S. O' Mally, Darbhanga District Gazetteer, (1907), p. 25.

square mile) followed by Siwan (1,383) and Gopalganj (1,189). In Champaran district Sadar Sub-division and Bettiah Sub-division have the density of populatien as 1094 and 772 persons per square mile respectivelv where as in Muzaffarpur district the highest density of population is concentrated in Hajipur Sub-division, (i. e. 1441 persons per square mile) followed by the Sadar (1314) and Sitamarhi Sub-division (1362). Darbhanga district has the population-density of 1436, 1422 and 1188 per square mile in the Sub-divisions of Samastipur, Sadar, and Madhubani, respectively. Considering Tirhut Division as a whole Hajipur Sub-division in Muzaffarput district is the most densely populated while the Bettiah Sub-division in Champaran district has the lowest density of population in Tirhut.

With the present rate of growth, it is ascertained that the density of population in the different districts of Tirhut in 2001 A. D. will be as follows[11] :—

| Distrit | Population density ( 2001 A. D. ) |
|---|---|
| Champaran | 1147 |
| Darbhanga | 1617 |
| Muzaffarpur | 1656 |
| Saran | 1738 |

**Age and Sex Structure** :—Out of the total population of 15,122,554, only 44.6% lie in the working age group, (15-59 years); and of these 44% is of male working population as against the female working population of 56% (Fig. 3). This is obvious from the fact that a big percentage of male in the working age group has imigrated to other district of the state and to other states of the country in persuit of employment, trade, manufacturing and other business.

Again out of the total population only 6360533 are males and 8762021 females. The sex ratio in this way is 1057 females per 1000 males as against 944 famales per 1000 males for the state of Bihar.

**Occupational Structure** :– 64.03%of the total population in Tirhut accounts of non-workers and only a third of the total population is accounted in the other industrial categories of workers. The percentage of non-workers for the state, as a whole, accounts only 58.6%.

The agriculture is undoubtedly the most important occupation in the region. The percentage of primary workers, i.e. cultivators,

11 E. Ahmad, Bihar-Physical, Economic, Regional Geography (1955), p. 214.

agricultural labourers and workers in mining, etc., in the total working population stands as high as 82.1%

In the total secondary population, household workers are about 9% of the total industrial population. The percentage of workers engaged in manufacturing industry and also in construction are only 1.2% and 4%

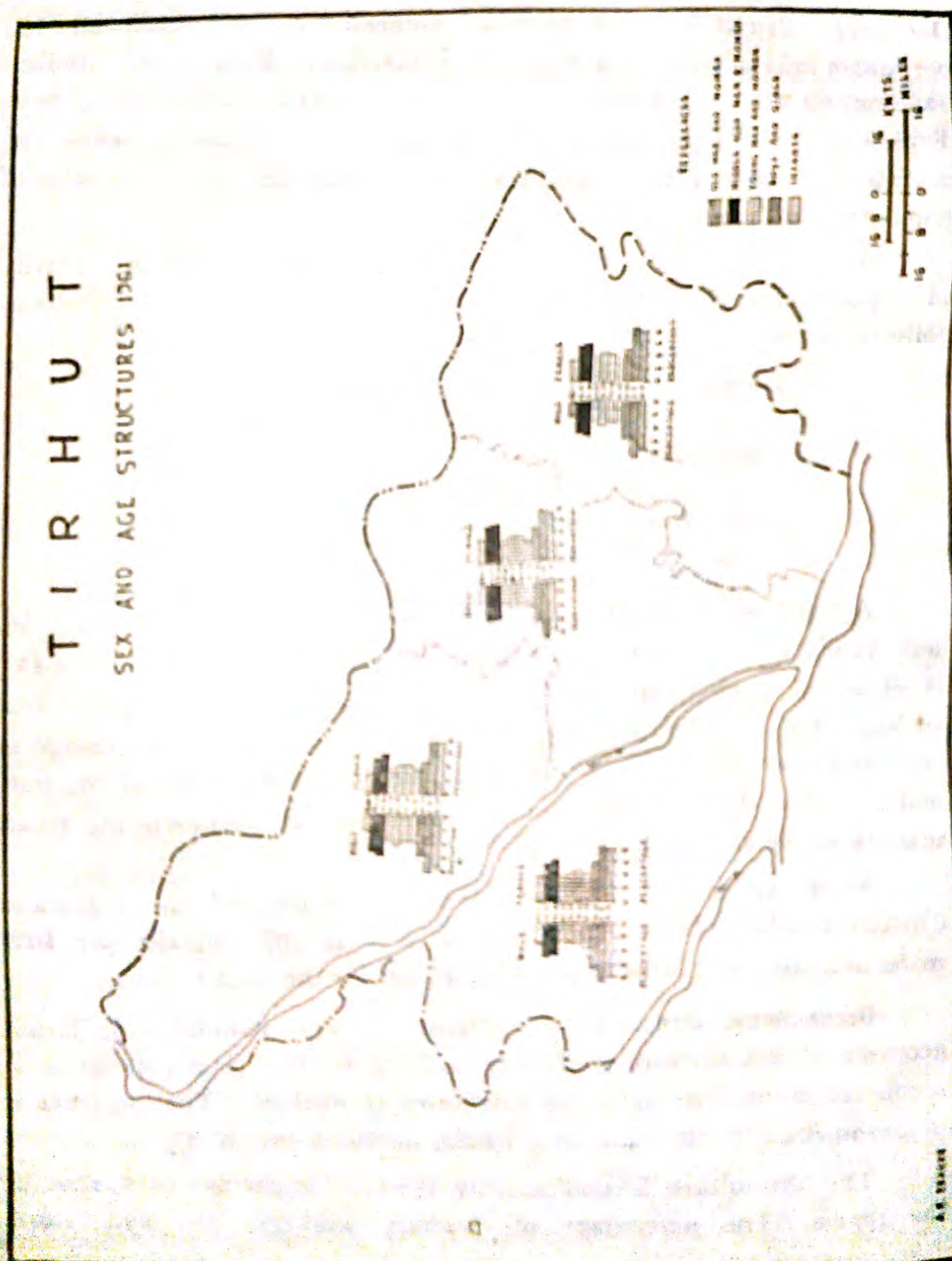



Fig. 3

respectively. They hold an insignificant role because Tirhut has no manufacturing industries save the few Sugar Mills.

In the total tertiary population, the percentage of other services is considerably high, i. e. 5·9% which is followed by trade and commerce constituting 2.7% and communication and transport constituting .8%.

**Summary** :—From the above discussion it may be inferred that Tirhut which is sharing the major western half of the north Ganga plain in Bihar, is a monotonous alluvial plain drain by numerous streams debouching from the Himalyas. It has an age old agricultural based economy by a high density of population. As it is mainly rural area so it lacks in manufacturing industries except sugar mills and hence the people are poor as well as backward. Population problem will be in the head line as there is the acute population on land. The chaining occupational structure is the only hope in encreasing urbanisation and industrialization of the region.